

**SONGS
AND
DREAMS**



P. M. RASKIN



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Songs and Dreams

P. M. Raskin



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*This book belongs
To you, my wife;
You bought my songs,
And paid a life.*

Foreword

A volume of poems requires no preface; and yet, if the reader can never be told *how* poems are written, why should he sometimes not be told under what conditions they are written?

English is not my native language, not even the language of my early youth. When landing in London some twenty years ago, a boy of nineteen, I knew Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian, German and French, but not a word of English. In some of those languages I, at that time, already wrote and published poems, but it has always been my desire — nay, my ambition — to make English my medium of expression. It was not, however, before 1910 that I attempted my first poem in English. In 1914 my first volume, "Songs of a Jew," was published in London. For that volume Mr. Israel Zangwill, whom I did not know personally, wrote an introduction and found a publisher.

I knew that when Mr. Zangwill wrote of those poems that some of them "should have been written by Browning in his particularly lucid moments," he was probably over-kind to me, but I confess that it made me happy; it was the fulfillment of an ambition — to overcome the difficulty of language.

In November, 1915, I came over to the States, and a few months later the Jewish Publication Society of America published my "Songs of a Wanderer"— a

FOREWORD

book which obtained admission to more than twenty-four thousand homes and libraries in the United States.

Before leaving England a London editor wrote me that the Muses cannot digest American food, and that my Well of Inspiration would be dried up in the torrid climate of American Materialism. I am glad that that prophecy has not come true. "Songs and Dreams," the favorite child of my soul, was *born* in America.

I am a child of the wandering race. With my native land — my stepfather,— and my native tongue — my stepmother — I found in English a sweet and beautiful sister whom I love, and to whom, in my inspired moments, I confide my Dreams and sing my Songs.

New York, June, 1919.

P. M. R.

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My Songs

*Though the singer will soon be forgotten,
My song will accomplish its goal,
For a song that a soul has begotten.
Forever will live like a soul.*

*For the voice that to sing me has bidden
Is a power that comes from above.
And in these simple sonnets are hidden
The gall and the sweetness of love.*

*Not ambition to climb Fortune's steeple
Made me sing, but a power divine;
And the woes, and the hopes of my People'
Are re-echoed in each simple line.*

*Not of fame nor of gold was I dreaming
When playing my God-bidden part,
And the song from my heart that is streaming
Must find a response in a heart.*

The Old Story

This is the story as old as the skies,
 This is the story of mine:
I met a maid with star-like eyes—
 My heart—how could it not pine?

I know it has ever, ever been so,
 I know it will ever be:
The deer to the forest ever will go,
 To the juicy clover—the bee.

The eagle will ever wing high above,
 The wayfarer seek the shade;
And the heart of a man that is throbbing with love
 Will ever be drawn by a maid.

So this is my story as old as the earth,
 The soul of my peace and my strife;
The tale that to joy and to sorrow gives birth—
 The gladdest and saddest of life.

The First Kiss

How old was I? Well, just eighteen,
 And she—about the same;
The skies were grey, the park was green,
 The moon—a pale-red flame. . . .

We were alone . . . We sat so close . . .
 Dead silence in the park . . .
I felt her breath — a perfumed rose,
 And all around us—dark . . .

Such eyes no human eye had seen —
 Two springs of sparkling bliss . . .
How old was I? Well, just eighteen —
 She gave me but one kiss . . .

And many years have gone since then
 Of joy and of regret;
I lived and loved like other men—
 That kiss—I feel it yet!

Nature and Woman

The heavens are blue and the roses are red,
 I love them when calm is my mood;
Her eyes, too, are blue, and her lips, too, are red—
 Why set they aflame then my blood?

I watch the sun rising, I watch its eclipse—
 My joy and my sadness are still;
Then why should a smile or a pout on her lips
 So rouse me, and stir me, and thrill?

I gaze at the stars in the firmament far
 And calmly enjoy their soft light.
Then why should two eyes, and each eye a mere star,
 So haunt me by day and by night?

Woman and Sister

I told her that passion was human;
 Embraced her, caressed her, and kissed her;
She murmured: "Oh, no! Not as woman,
 I want to be loved as your sister."

An effort I made superhuman—
 Persistently tried to resist her:
But she would be loved as a woman,
 And never as merely a sister.

A Love-Song

You sent me a love-song—
 I frankly concede it,
With you as my love-song
 I hardly, dear, need it;

For music and beauty—
 The gifts of the graces—
Far more than in songs are
 In maiden's embraces.

My heart, too, my dearest,
 With love-songs is laden,
But none half so sweet as
 The kiss of a maiden.

What Is Poetry?

“What is poetry?” she asked me,
 And her soul was deeply stirred,
As I spoke of dreamy twilight,
 Crooning rill and trilling bird.

“Poetry,” I said, “is searching
 For the great eternal goal;
Poetry is heaven’s torch-light
 Kindled by the human soul.

“Poetry is earth reflected
 In the crystal sea above;
Poetry is fadeless beauty,
 Quenchless grace, and deathless love.

“Poetry is man made angel,
 Earth made heaven, toil made art;
Poetry is God’s great secret
 Whispered to the poet’s heart.”

As she stood her eyes enkindled,
 Asking softly, “Is it true?”
I embraced her and I added:—
 “Poetry, my dear, is you.”

Winter

Mighty is the wintry evening,
Mighty too, I feel;
Skies of gold, and earth of silver
And the air is steel.

With my sweetheart I am driving
Where—I do not know;
Diamonds twinkle in the heavens,
Diamonds in the snow.

Coachman, drive us faster, faster
Through the wintry night
To a spot where men are winters—
Strong and pure and bright.

Closer press to me, my sweetheart,
To my bosom cling;
Love can blossom in the winter
Just as in the spring.

Love Found and Lost

I

Two hills, and between —
A velvety green,
Where breezes caressed
Each blade heaven-blessed.
A grove, and beyond,
A silvery pond,
Reflecting the skies
With diamond-lit eyes.
A fresh eve in May,
A world young and gay,
 A green field below,
 A blue field above,
 'Twas there long ago
 I found my first love!

II

A ghetto-walled town,
A shanty bowed down,
Half-empty a room
Enshrouded in gloom,
A maiden whose life
Embittered by strife

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

Whose face sad and pale
Told Poverty's tale,
A wintry black night,
No fuel, no light,—
 An earth deaf below,
 A sky mute above—
 'Twas there long ago
 I lost my first love!

June and December

They say the days in June are long
And shortest in December;
But surely, dear, they must be wrong,
For you and I remember

We met in June, we used to roam
Day-long 'mong trees and flowers,
And when at night you left for home—
How swift had fled the hours!

The shortest days were all in June;
We saw the sun descending
And wished some Joshua'd stop the sun
And make the days unending.

But when the sky grew cloud-beset,
And frost our earth invaded,
And in December when we met—
Our dreams, like lilies, faded.

We met again, as friend meets friend,
Yet felt so lone and friendless;
The day we did together spend,
It seemed so long—so endless.

To Kate

Believe me not whenever life is drearest
I say my love has perished long ago;
The sea has ebbs; you must not think though, dearest,
It never will again come on the flow. . . .

A while is gone—the foaming waves are thronging
And rushing onward, onward to the shore;
A while is gone—my loving heart is longing
For you, my sweetheart, ever, evermore.

What Are the Stars Made Of?

My dearest once asked me,
Oh, tell me, my love,
Of what are the stars made
That twinkle above?

I kissed her, and told her:
"The stars, darling, are
The kisses of lovers—
Each kiss is a star."

She blushingly whispered:
"Oh, love, is it true?
And why are tonight, then,
The stars but so few?"

A False Partner

Love's partnership agreement
 I signed in haste,
And all my soul's vast fortune
 You made me waste,
You knew your heart was bankrupt—
 Nor pure, nor chaste.

You knew your heart was bankrupt;
 Defrauding mine,
You spent its priceless treasure—
 Its love divine;
And now my soul condemns you
 To pay a fine;

My life shall stay forever
 From yours apart;
Our partnership is ended,
 But ere we part—
Take back all checks dishonored
 Of your false heart.

I Sometimes Wish . . .

I sometimes wish you were a stream,
And I of dawning day a beam,
That I might pierce your mute cold heart,
And life and joy to it impart,
And make each drop a frisking elf,
And play with sprites I made myself.

By a Tree

Know you where I met her?
By a tree!
Strangers in the forest
Both were we.

Rain poured down and lightning
Pierced the wood;
There we two together
Sheltered stood.

Whilst we mutely listened
To each leaf
Telling tales of sylvan
Joy and grief,

Musingly I queried:
If a tree
Does not hide its secrets—
Why should we?

So to her I pointed
Out a nest,
Where two wrens were blessed with
Love and rest,

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

And the leafy branches
 O'er us bent,
Canopied us, nodding
 Their assent.

From life's storm a shelter
 Both found we:
Know you where I met her?
 By a tree!

Astronomy

We walked by night. She asked me what
I knew about the stars;
I spoke of comet, planet, moon,
Of Jupiter and Mars;

Of sun-eclipses, orbits, zones,
Of rainbows in the skies;
And all the time I studied but
Two glowing stars—her eyes.

Of sunset and of sunrise, too,
I spoke, but all the while
I thought of but one sunrise bright—
The sunrise of her smile.

The milky way I full explained;
The galaxies beneath;
And looked upon her milk-white throat,
Her milky row of teeth.

And when she pressed herself to me
And brooding looked above,
I kissed her lips, her eyes, and said:
“The stars are worlds of love.”

When Love to You I'd Spoken

When love to you I'd spoken,
Two witnesses were near:
A birdling and a streamlet,
But you alone could hear.

When of your love I'm dreaming,
And of your parting kiss,
The bird and streamlet hear me,
But you alone I miss.

Regret

I wanted you to be the spark, that kindles
 The dreamer's soul aflame,
My torch and light whene'er my power dwindles
 In night, or grief, or shame.

But deep was, soon, my disillusion,
 You could not play that part;
And pardon me, oh, pardon my intrusion,
 Into a stranger's heart.

Like Two Stars

Like two stars we were attracted
Ere we met;
Like two stars our zone was ever
Cloud-beset.

Like two stars we deemed each other
Worlds of gold;
Like two stars we found each other
Far and cold.

My Pandora

Do I love her, do I not,
Now again I've met her?
Ask me not; I only know,
I wish I could forget her.

The thought of her gives great delight,
And grief and pain still greater;
She is my joy, she is my woe—
I love her and I hate her

She is my sunlight and my cloud,
My safety and my danger;
She is my friend, she is my foe,
She is to me a stranger.

I know full well I am her slave,
And know I am above her;
I pray to heaven that I could
Nor hate her nor yet love her

Sweet Death

When Moses the heavenly prophet
Attained on the earth his life's goal,
The Angel of Death was reluctant
To go with his sword for his soul.

But smilingly whispered Jehovah:
"No mortal can death ever miss;
If not by the sword of the Angel
Then perish he must by my kiss."

Jehovah, thy lesson was followed
By many a goddess since then,
Who slays not with sword, but with kisses
The bravest and purest of men.

And oft in the arms of my charmer,
'Midst rapture and heavenly bliss,
I know that one day I shall perish,
Like Moses of old, from her kiss.

The Change

I met her again, and I wondered,
 Oh, can she be truly the same,
Who once in my soul had enkindled
 A glowing, a heavenly flame?

Are these the eyes all-piercing
 That shot dart after dart
Of love and love's adoration
 Into my worshiping heart?

Are these the lips that compelled me
 To kiss them again and again?
The smile my sad heart greeted
 Like sunshine after rain?

Is she the fay who once turnéd
 My gloomiest autumn to Spring?
Is this the woman who erstwhile
 My soul and by blood taught to sing?

Then where is the spell and the magic
 That made my life joyous and full?
And what made the woman beside me
 So wearisome, homely and dull?

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

A voice I heard in answer:

Thy questions are foolish and strange;
Thy heart, if thou carefully searchest,
Thou soon wilt discover the change.

I Did Not Betray

Should you meet a lonely maiden
 By a road, where breezes moan,
Pacing to and fro at twilight;
 Seeking someone, finding none;

Should she eye you sadly, mutely,
 Hide her tears and turn away—
You must stop her and must tell her
 That I could not her betray.

That I thought her far too sacred
 To profane her as my wife,
That when all my dreams have vanished,
 I had saved one dream for life

Gone

I came back one evening
 And found her no more . . .
My room was as cosy,
 As neat as before.

Each thing in position:
 The books on the shelf,
The bed decked with pillows
 She once laced herself.

Took nothing of value,
 When she did depart,
Took nothing of value—
 Excepting my heart. . . .

Like a Linnet

They blind the linnet that its trill
 A sweeter note may find,
And thus, I know, it was her will
 The poet's soul to blind.

A flame she kindled in my soul
 And spent it spark by spark;
Again I see in life no goal,
 Again my path is dark.

And when of love I sing my song,
 —The sweetest of its kind,—
The wondrous sounds to her belong—
 For she my soul made blind. . . .

Too Proud

Oh, a heart can talk loud,
 And a heart has an ear;
And fair stories, my dear,
From my heart thine could hear—
 Had it spoken;

But, alas, I'm too proud
 From my path to depart,
And no tale from my heart
Thine will hear, though we part—
 Heart-broken.

We Cannot Part

You cannot part from me, my dear,
My love knows no eclipse;
Your oaths are frozen on my ear,
Your kisses—on my lips.

I'll be with you, I'll live with you,
Wherever you may go;
And day and night, and all life through
You'll feel my pain and woe.

Another man you love, and still
My treacherous friend I claim;
Your love's embraces never will
Conceal your treason's shame.

Oh no! from me you cannot part,
Whatever you may plan;
You cannot take a man's whole heart
And cast away the man.

To You

Your lightnings of wit used to charm me,
Your thunders of wrath were too mild;
And if you intended to harm me,
You failed in your object, poor child.

For you, like a tender, sweet flower,
One cannot help love, but not fear;
In sweetness and smiles is your power,
But not in your anger, my dear!

She Is My Sister

She is my sister only,
 She can't be more;
And I am lonely, lonely,
 As e'er before.

Stead sunlight I am given
 A twinkling star;
Though brighter is my heaven—
 Yet cold and far.

Love

Hand in hand and lip to lip
 I saw them in a park;
Hearts aflame and eyes aglow,
 Whisp'ring in the dark.

Dreaming of my dreams long-dead,
 And of my youth long past,
Musingly I asked my heart
 How long their love would last.

Whispering, my heart replied:
 "Midst earthly stress and strife,
One hour of bliss, one hour of love,
 Is worth a loveless life!"

The Language of Flowers

For love—blushing roses,
And daises for truth,
I oft used to send her
In days of my youth.

We parted. I'm friendless,
Forsaken and sad,
I now to my flowers
"Forget-me-nots" add.

A Woman's Tears

I asked her love; she quietly sobbed;
I did not know
The silent answer of her tears—
Yes, or no!

One day I told her we must part—
She wept again;
I knew not what her tears expressed—
Bliss or pain.

We parted. Many years had gone;
Once more we met;
She clasped my hand and cried—of joy
Or of regret?

I asked her to explain—in tears
She turned away:
Offended, vexed, or grieved, or hurt—
I could not say.

My Bride

I was dreaming last night,
 Someone knocked at my door,
And there entered a maid,
 Whom I knew well before.

And she said: "Oh, my friend,
 You remember that night,
When our hearts were as pure,
 As the heaven was bright.

When you spoke of love's flame,
 Of its magic and spell,
Of that marvellous flame
 That no ocean can quell;

And I gave you my hand,
 And I gave you my heart,
And you gave me your oath
 That we never would part.

Many years have since passed,
 But I trust in you still,
But your promise I wait
 For you to fulfill.

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

You have given your oath
 And I trusted its truth,
And you now must come back
 To the bride of your youth."

Thus she said in her plea
 So impassioned, so true,
And my lips whispered: "Love,
 I am coming to you."

In the morning I woke,
 Bitter tears did I shed;
I remembered my bride
 Who was long ago dead.

I Met Her

I met her in my dream last night,
So fair and bright,
With youth and love her eyes aglow,
As long ago.
She smiled—her smile lit in the dark
A golden spark;
She sang—how did my soul rejoice
To hear her voice!
She whispered love. But as she spoke,
Alas, I woke!
My cold, my solitary room
Was wrapped in gloom;
I wondered why should dreams not be
From waking free.

Our Secret

Our secret carefully hiding,
 We walked through mead and glen,
In stars and moon confiding,
 But not in men.

We chose but hidden places,
 We met but people few;
And yet their smiling faces
 Proclaimed: they knew!

Omar Khayyam

Drink of Passion's golden cup,
 Think not what comes after;
Treat the virtues of the fools
 With contempt and laughter.

Of the virtues preached by men
 None than life is greater;
Live, my friend, today and now—
 And be virtuous later.

If to you a moment winks—
 Why should you disdain it?
Drink the cup of life and love,
 To the bottom drain it!

As the bird, the brook, the wind,
 Play, not knowing sorrow;
Live and love, for don't forget—
 You'll be dead tomorrow!

Before and After

Awaiting our meeting

My glad heart is beating

 A tune: "She is thine, she is thine!"

But after her leaving

My sad heart is heaving

 A sigh: "But in vain did you pine!"

To Deborah

Remember when we met that night?
 You looked so fair, so proud;
Half-jestingly I spoke of love—
 You merely laughed aloud.

But whether you did laugh *with* me,
 Or *at* me, as it seemed—
Of love and laughter and of you
 I ever since have dreamed.

To My Love

I am king of fields and forests;
 To me belong
Their hidden priceless treasures
 Of bloom and song.
But I'm lonely, dear, I'm lonely,—
 For you I long!

Will you share, oh, dearest,
 My realm with me?
I'll bid each bird and flower,
 Each brook and tree,
To greet you as my princess
 With song and glee.

There waits for us a palace
 That none can move;
Its floor of silk—of diamonds
 Its roof above;
But I'm lonely, dear, I'm lonely—
 Oh, come, sweet love!

Dark Is the Night

Dark is the night,
 Not a beam, not a spark—
I care not—her eyes
 I can see in the dark.

Lone in my room,
 Not a word, not a cheer—
I care not—with me
 Is my best friend—my dear.

Mute is the earth,
 As the heaven above;
I care not—my soul
 Sings of beauty and love!

Come to Me

Be to me, sweetheart, a friend or a sister,
I care no longer whatever thou be;
Child of my dreams, I have tried to forget thee,
Child of my dreams, I am waiting for thee.

Heaven is witness I sought to forget thee,
Wandered the earth from its end to its end,
Sought the acquaintance of men and of women,
Flattered and flirted, but found not a friend.

Heaven is witness I sought to forget thee,
Sought the acquaintance of meadows and skies;
Flattered the moonlight and flirted with flowers—
None could so smile as thy lips and thy eyes.

Did not I try from my heart to expel thee,
Drown in the stream of my song my sad dream?
Am I to blame that my song breathes thy spirit—
Thou art its music, its beauty, its theme!

Why?

One more hour, and I will press her
 To this throbbing heart of mine;
I will kiss her and caress her,
 And will tell her how I pine.

She will listen, she will wonder,
 —I will read it in her glance—
Those whom fate has rent asunder
 Can they be made one by chance?

She will reason: "Life has dangers,
 Stronger than the human heart;
We in life have met as strangers,
 And as strangers we must part."

I will hear, agree, and ponder:
 "Yes, she's soberer than I;"
Still this throbbing heart will wonder,
 "Why, O dearest, tell me why? . . .

To

As my first love seemed my last,
 So my last — the first did seem;
Now, when both are dead and past,
 I again may love and dream.

Changeful is the dreamer's heart,
 Thus capricious fate has willed:
Love comes thither—to depart,
 Dreams are born there—to be killed.

Maybe, I will dream again:
 Life and love's sweet dream—and yet,
Such sad joy and such sweet pain
 No new love can make forget.

You Left Me

You left me—I thought it were best
 To show no resistance;
If love can be proved by a test —
 That test is but distance.

I know we can love though we part;
 In love and devotion
A heart may well speak to a heart
 Far over the ocean.

If hearts for each other will fret,
 No distance will wean them!
If strange, though together, will yet
 Be oceans between them.

So go, in God's name, go, my friend,
 The ocean cross over;
But if you should pine in the end—
 Come back to your lover.

My Dream

We met in life's sadliest hour
Of sunset and gloom;
Our dream was an autumn-raised flower,
Awaiting its doom—
To fade ere its bloom.

I wish that I never had met her,
Alas, it's too late!
O God! how I longed to forget her,
And wipe off my fate
From memory's slate.

I knew that she never would love me,—
We are too extreme—
Then why should a dumb sky above me,
A rock and a stream
Reflect a dead dream?

To My Sweetheart

(After Shneier)

Rosy apples, deep-green shadows,
 Velvet meads the grove surrounding,
And the laughter of the river
 Far and wide and loud resounding.

Come to me, my angel-sweetheart,
 Ripened fruit and boughs will screen us;
Me—an apple; thee—an apple;
 And a stolen kiss between us. . . .

Come, the autumn pale-blue flowers
 Will embrace thee, will caress thee;
Me—a flower; thee—a flower,
 To my throbbing heart I'll press thee!

I have stores of golden legends.
 They to love me will impell thee;
Me—a legend; thee—a legend,
 And life's secret I will tell thee.

I Knew Her

(*To S. P.*)

I knew her, I met her, I spoke to her oft,
Her face was so calm and her voice was so soft,
Her eyes were so lucid, so mellow and mild,
Her gait was so modest—a child, quite a child!
I secretly treasured a dream in my heart:
One day we shall speak — and perchance never part.
That dream was my treasure—yet each time we met
My throbbing heart told me: not yet, oh, not yet!

One night when the noise of the city was hushed,
I came out to meet her—she saw me and blushed;
Her eyes were alit with a soul-kindled glance,
And wistfully gazing as though in a trance;
Her bosom was heaving, her murmur was strange,
I knew not the reason, I guessed not the change,
And when I implored her to tell me my fate;
She blushingly whispered: too late, friend, too
late! . . .

My Home to You Is Open

My door to you is open,
 I never bar my gate;
Whenever you will call me
 Will never be too late.

Come in, I will not ask you
 The reason why you went,
With whom you were last evening,
 And how the hours were spent.

Why ask these childish questions—
 Their answers well I know:
Life called you to a banquet,
 You could not help but go.

Come straight into my parlor
 And have no fear at all—
I too have heard life calling,
 And answered to its call.

Stolen Moments

Take back all the years that life gave me,
 But leave me the moments I stole;
The years, the sad years did enslave me,
 The moments gave wings to my soul.

I remember that stolen half-hour:
 When fragrance and song filled the air,
The fields were beginning to flower,
 My love like the spring-time was fair.

The lilacs alit with their blossom,
 The lisp of the breeze in the wood,
Each heave of my sweetheart's full bosom—
 The thrill that it sent through my blood!

The smile and the glance of my dearest
 To passion and joy giving birth,
The sky looking bluest and clearest,
 The paradise men call the earth!

The noise in the trees we could trust not,
 Our kisses suppressed and yet loud;
Her passionate whisper: "You must not!"
 Her glances, half yielding, half proud!

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

Who cared then for wealth or for morals,
 For treasures below or above;
Than heaven, or diamonds, or corals,
 I valued one moment of love.

Of all my years lived I prize only
 The moments, the moments I stole;
The years were so empty, so lonely —
 The moments gave wings to my soul.

Vain Reproach

Your fate, dearest child, you deplore,
And sigh that I love you no more;
Why sigh and reproach me in vain,
When you can my love win again . . .

Now push my hand gently away,
And say, as you once used to say:
"You cannot remain with me long—
My 'Ma' said last night it is wrong . . ."
And after you say to me this,
Be vexed when I ask for a kiss,
With laughter run out of the room,
And leave me aflame in the gloom . . .
Then come in and smilingly blush;
When I say: "sweet love!" you say: "hush!"
Be sulky and don't let me speak,
And don't let my lips touch your cheek,
Unplait your long gold-waving hair,
Stand angry and fairy-like fair,
And be just as once you have been,
My princess of sweet seventeen. . . .

Oh, dearest, I see by your smile,
You think me so cruel and vile,

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

I read in your eyes filled with gloom:
“A lily once faded can't bloom;
A beautiful dream will not make
One happy, when one is awake . . .”

But dearest, if this be the truth,
Why claim the dead love of my youth?

To

Despise the blazing day,
But greet the single ray,
That comes across your way
And slowly fades away—
 Its memory endures;

And when the night is stark,
And lifeless, dumb and dark—
A stray note from a lark,
A falling star, a spark—
 Oh, greet them—they are yours!

Burning Love Letters

Love letters a bundle
 I threw into the flames, . . .
Silently I witness
 Burning precious names.

Here is charming Olga,
 Time, oh, how it flies—
Features half-forgotten,
 Can't forget her eyes.

Here is little Florence,
 As in days of old:
Lips — like fresh-plucked cherries,
 Hair—a wave of gold.

Now comes dainty Queenie,
 Fairy-like a maid;
Hours of bliss she gave me,
 Years of tears I paid.

Here is sweetest Gracie—
 Purity and mirth—
Tell me not that angels
 Walk not on this earth!

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

All my dreams and phantoms
 One by one come back;
All my dreams and phantoms
 Turning red, then black. . . .

Blossoms of the garden
 Of my restless youth,
Bleached and faded portraits,
 Shadows of life's truth. . . .

Now at last comes Annie—
 From my place I start:
Wicked flames, oh, spare it—
 Why, this cost a heart!

Spare it, pray, oh, spare it,
 Just a moment wait!
My hand I stretch to save it—
 Alas, too late, too late!

I Love You

(To Esther)

“What is love?” you asked me, child,
And in doubt you gazed and smiled,
For your heart, your virgin heart
Still is safe from Cupid’s dart. . . .

But there soon will come a day,
When “I love you” you will say,
When of men beneath the sun
One will be your only one. . . .

Wondrous things will happen then
Which will alter world and men,
Which will make in chorus sing
Bird and breeze, and brook, and spring,
And our gloom bespotted globe
Make itself in radiance robe.

Make the heavens chant a hymn
Like your heart—to him, to him!
Sweetly-sad and sadly-sweet
They “I love you” will repeat.

SONGS AND DREAMS

I love you, I love you, my sweetheart,
The earth and the heaven will sing;
I love you, I love you, my sweetheart,
As lilies love dew in the spring.

I love you, I love you, my sweetheart,
For you day and night do I long,
I love you, I love you, my sweetheart,
For love is life's beautiful song. . . ."

Yes, my child, it may seem strange,
But in truth the world will change
Greener will be field and dell,
Sweeter will the roses smell,
Brighter will the heavens shine
And your heart will sweetly pine. . . .

Then a sparklet from the skies
Will be kindled in your eyes,
Ah, my child, that very spark
Lit the world when worlds were dark. . . .
When Jehovah made our earth
Frail like infants after birth,
He upon it gazed and smiled,
Said: "I love you" to his child. . . .

Yet, my darling, do not deem
That love's path is one fair dream,
That your lover's smile or glance
Will of life make one long trance,

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

That each day, and all life-long
You will hear that magic song,
Ever soar in rapturous mirth,
Never heed our care-worn earth. . . .
That to love means hence to live—
All to take and naught to give. . . .

“I love you, I love you, my sweetheart—
 For comfort and pleasure I crave;
I love you, I love you, my sweetheart,
 Then you be my gold-fettered slave.

I love you, I love you, my sweetheart,
 To you from on high I look down;
I love you, I love you, my sweetheart—
 Then I am your kingdom and crown. . . .”

Nay, “I love you” does not mean:
I shall be your mistress-queen,
You shall serve me night and day,
Slave and toil, my whims obey. . . .
Child, “I love you” rather means:
All the crowns of all the queens
I shall gladly, gladly give
With my chosen one to live.

I will bring you comfort, rest,
Nestling at your faithful breast,
Make your home a godly shrine,
Where your honor will be mine;
Be a mother and a wife,

SONGS AND DREAMS

Be a friend and mate in life,
Offer you a woman's wealth:
Beauty, faith, and youth, and health,
And, if need be, rock night-long
My sick baby with a song. . . .

Child, "I love you" means: to you
I shall be forever true,
With my lover, husband, friend,
I shall go to earth's far end,
And a cottage small and dim
Will a palace be—with him. . . .

Yea, I love you! joy and care
I with you will ever share,
Want or riches, shame or pride—
You will find me by your side.

Child, "I love you" means: no chain
Shall our sacred love restrain,
As the stars and as the sea
Be it pure and be it free,
Be it, too, the kindling fire
That to *great* deeds shall inspire;
From this day and till life's end
You my faithful guide and friend.

I love you, I love you, my sweetheart,
With you I will fearlessly go;
I love you, I love you, my sweetheart
Through sorrow and worry and woe.

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

I love you, I love you, my sweetheart,
 For better or worse you are mine;
I love you, I love you, my sweetheart,
 My love is unselfish, divine. . . .”

Such, my darling, is true love
That makes heaven smile above,
That makes angels bless the day,
When “I love you” you must say. . . .

Part Two
Autumn Flowers

A Beggar's Song

Have you met a beggar lying
 By a lonely road at night,
When the autumn-wind is sighing,
 Pouring out a stream of fright?

Trees with branches black and shaking,
 Looming ghost-like as they moan,
Clouds with storm and lightning pregnant—
 He is homeless and alone.

Shadows frighten him and tease him,
 And he cannot fall asleep,
And he suddenly starts singing,
 Singing, so as not to weep.

I am often like the beggar,
 When my night seems cold and long;
On life's lonely road deserted—
 Not to weep—I sing a song!

Her Gift

She came to me when I was young,
Ere I was lone and vagrant,
And brought me as a gift a wreath
Of flowers sweet and fragrant.

“This wreath, my child, an emblem is
Of golden sun-lit hours,
And may the dreamer’s songs be sweet,
And fresh, and pure, as flowers.”

Alas! Too soon I lost my spring,
And never, never found it;
And if my song had one bright ray,
There was a cloud around it.

And if my heart had one bright hope,
My nearest friend abused it;
Oh, Muse, take back thy beauteous gift,
I never, never used it.

The Alchemist

The Alchemist am I of old,
Transfusing base metals to gold.

The sadness, the sighs, and the tears
With which life has filled all my years,

The sorrows, the woes and the wrongs—
Behold, I transfused into songs.

The Alchemist am I of old,
Transfusing base metals to gold.

My heart all ablaze, like a flame,
Makes hymns of my pain and my shame.

Of scoffing, and laughter, and scorn,
My rhythmical ballads are born.

The Alchemist am I of old,
Transfusing base metals to gold.

The pity is but that my art
Consumes in its process my heart.

The Poet Is Silent

The poet is silent . . . no song can he sing,
The strings of his harp are all broken;
He once sang of youth, and of love and of spring—
These words must no longer be spoken.

For youth lies entombed and awaiting its fate
To pour out its life-blood like water;
It dreams not of love, but of force and of hate,
Its pride and its glory is slaughter.

And spring, golden spring, to the poet is dead,
And nature can no more inspire;
The flowers appear to him all colored red,
The air—full of smoke and of fire.

The song of the breeze and the song of the bird
Are silenced by cannon in battle;
The shepherd no longer is leading his herd,
The men now are driven like cattle.

The poet is silent, for dead is his spring,
His song, and his joy, and his gladness;
The poet is silent, for he cannot sing
Of wrath, and of hate, and of madness.

Among Trees

I am walking through the wood,
O'er my childhood's days I brood,
When with trees I played alone—
Mates I've ever loved and known.
Aspen, birch, and oak and elm,
Knights with golden shield and helm,
Chestnut, maple, spruce and pine,
All brave playmates were of mine.
Fir and poplar, nut and pear,
Silver-leaved, and tall, and fair,
Walnut, willow, hemlock, beech,
Sun-bejewelled, gold-robed each,
Here I am, your mate and friend,
Come with you a day to spend.

Men are trees — saith Sacred Writ,
Aye, but they are tempest-split;
Storm of life has bent them down
In the human wood—the town. . . .
Split and broken they are all:
Human pines are dwarfy small,
Human oaks are thunder-rent,
Juiceless, leafless, dry and bent—
So to you, my mates, I came
To escape from human shame.

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

Once when I was small and weak
Sylvan tongue you taught me speak,
And in young and fragrant spring—
All my fairest songs to sing.
Now when I'm your weary guest,
You, my friends, shall give me rest,
Maybe I, in childhood's mood,
Will forget the human wood. . . .

My Mother

They sent me a message,
And curtly it read;
But four words were in it:
"Thy mother is dead!"

My heart remained tranquil
And tearless my eye,
How could I believe that
An angel could die?

The time-tide is flowing—
My childhood and youth
Eloped with life's beauty
And virtue and truth.

When dreamless I wander
In search of a goal;
My mother, my angel,
Revives in my soul.

And oft when my life seems
So aimless and vile,
To me, as in childhood,
She comes with a smile;

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

She lovingly whispers:
 “My child, don’t despair,”
And cheeringly helps me
 My burden to bear.

And sometimes when carried
 Away by life’s tide,
And lost in the darkness—
 She comes as a guide,

And murmuring softly:
 “Thou goest astray,”
She kindles a torch-light,
 And points a new way.

They sent me a message,
 And sadly it read;
But four words were in it—
 “Thy mother is dead!”

I did not believe it,
 No tears could I shed:
A mother—an angel—
 How can she be dead?

My Lost Bliss

I have left my native village,
 Father's blessing, mother's kiss;
I have left my native village—
 And have left in it my bliss.

In a strange land I awakened,
 Saw around me greed and hate;
When I found my bliss was missing,
 I went home, but came too late.

Father, mother, died of sorrow;
 They my treasure could not save;
Would not trust my bliss to strangers,
 So they took it to their grave.

Now I wander, finding nowhere
 Rest, or joy, or cheer, or mirth;
Knowing that my bliss is buried
 In my dear, my native earth.

A Dream

I dreamt that my heart was cremated,
 My ashes interred in an urn,
But under the dull-glowing ashes
 The sparklets of love did still burn.

They burned and glimmered and sparkled,
 And wide o'er the graveyard they spread,
And pierced the tombs and the gravestones,
 And pierced the hearts of the dead.

And out of the tombs arose straightway
 Of men and of women a crowd,
Their long-quenched eyes re-kindled
 They sang and they chattered aloud.

In passion embracing each other,
 They lifted their heads and they said:
"The love that the earth has denied us
 Shall triumph in graves 'mongst the dead."

Tears and Smiles

For world and mankind once I cried,
 They seemed so base, so vile,
And when I found my tear-well dried,
 Resolved 'twere best to smile.

I look on mankind as before,
 But somehow it appears,
That men deserve my smiles far more
 Than they deserved my tears.

Thankful

I am thankful every day
For every dewdrop, every ray.
For sunshine, as for storm and rain.
For gladness as for grief and pain.
Howe'er the gods of fate behave—
Life is better than the grave.

Heaven and Earth

“Higher, spirit, higher,
 Bear me from the sod,
To the orb of fire,
 To the realm of God.

For my soul is pining
 To approach the sphere,
Where the stars are shining
 Silver-lit and clear.

That it may, ascending,
 To that realm above,
In a trance unending
 Dream of bliss and love.”

* * *

And a voice I heard on high:
Not for mortals is the sky,
And the dreamer's joy and woe
Are on earth—below, below!
For the brightest stars of gold
Are but passionless and cold,
And the dreamer's soul in strife
Throbs with passion and with life;
For in man of clay and sod
Thrives his love and reigns his God!

Optimism

When I see the sky beclouded,
 Ghost-like shadows everywhere
Creeping over dale and mountain —
 Why despair?
May the earth be wrapped in darkness,
 Roar the thunder—rage the gale,
After storm the sun shines milder
 On hill and vale.

When the birds in autumn leave us,
 Warbling farewell in the air,
And the woods grow bare and silent—
 Why despair?
Soon new songs the birds will bring us
 With the bright, the golden spring,
And in new-born groves still sweeter
 They will sing.

When I see the tender flowers,
 Yesterday yet fresh and fair,
Paling, drooping, slowly fading,
 Why despair?
Nature, kindest of all mothers,
 Will preserve their seed alive,
Waking with the sun's caresses
 They'll revive.

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

When my soul with grief afflicted
Can no more its burden bear,
Light and hope seem gone forever,
Why despair?
After storm the sun shines brighter,
After mist the sky's more blue,
And a heart that's passed through sadness
Loves more true.

My Baby

(To Sulamith)

At times I know that I am only
A wingless bird in Nature's cage;
I feel so weary and so lonely
That every moment seems an age.

I doubt the truths of earth and heaven,
But doubt is vain as is belief;
Life seems so cold and mute, that even
Our tears and sighs give no relief.

Then all at once I hear the patter
Of swiftly-tripping little feet,
And soon—my baby's sing-song chatter
So pure, so innocent, so sweet:

“Oh, papa, dear, I saw a Polly,
But what she said I could not guess;
And papa, won't you tell my dolly
To play with me, and wash and dress?”

“I gave her toys,—she won't have any,
I told her, I would tell my Pa,
And papa, may I have a penny,
And papa, do you love my Ma?”

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

Two little eyes like opals shining
 Are peeping straight into my eyes,
Two little arms my neck entwining
 Dispel my cares, and tears, and sighs.

I feel no longer sad and weary,
 And gone is doubt, and pain, and strife —
I was mistaken, little dearie,
 There is both truth and love in life.

To a Child

Child, you are smiling—how bright is your smile;
Child, you are singing—your song rings so true!
Smile to me, sing to me yet for a while,
Once I was smiling and singing as you.

Wrecked on life's ocean is youth's magic ship,
Mastless and oarless my boat floats since then;
Life swept away the bright smile from my lip,
And my fair song—it was poisoned by men.

Smile to me, sing to me yet for a while,
Make me forget my past sorrow and care:
Life is so dismal, so dull, and so vile,
Smiles are so few and sweet songs are so rare.

A Tear

I dropped a tear in my garden—
 Tomorrow the sun will appear,
Mistaking my tear for a dew-drop
 Will turn into vapor my tear.

I know that the sun will discover
 That someone has led him astray;
My tear, like a cloud, will with darkness,
 With gloom and with grief veil the day.

The Changed World

You cannot tell me nought has changed;
 In vain—I know the truth. . . .
The world and men are not the same
 As they were in my youth.

The heavens never are so bright
 The fields are not so green,
The lilies not so white and pure
 As they in youth have been.

The lake is not so cool and clear,
 (In it I used to swim),
The wood has lost its mystic charm,
 The vales look bare and dim.

I miss the glow in maidens' eyes,
 Their magic lure I miss;
And maidens' lips are faint and pale,
 They seem not made to kiss. . . .

You say that I am growing old,
 And am from life estranged;
I swear, you are mistaken, friend,
 I swear, the world has changed! . . .

Alone

The dancing is over,
 And quenched is the light;
The hall is deserted
 That throbbed with delight;
Alone am I left here—
 Alone in the night.

Long silent the music,
 The laughter, the dance,
Long gone are the fairies,
 Long broken the trance;
'Tis empty and gloomy
 Wherever I glance.

The soft silken garments
 Are rustling no more;
The flowers half-trodden
 Lie pale on the floor—
And where shall I go to,
 When barred is each door?

A voice I hear whisper:
 Thy youth was a ball,
Thy flowers—illusions—
 Long faded are all;
And dark and deserted
 Thy heart is—the hall.

My Grave

Not in the sand of a desert,
Nor in the depth of a cave;
Deep in a flower-decked valley
Shall be the site of my grave.

Flowers shall blossom around me,
Soothing my rest with their breath;
Flowers my life had denied me
Shall be the gift of my death;

Breezes shall bear me their fragrance,
Lone in my grave when I doze;
Out of my heart shall one morning
Blossom a sweet-scented rose.

Wooing his maiden, the lover
Shall over my grave stop to rest,
Pluck out the rose for his sweetheart,
Pin on her love-throbbing breast.

Blushing the maiden shall answer,
Pay for his gift with a kiss;
I of life's joy will be dreaming,
Joy I was fated to miss.

Wounded

A soldier lies hurt in the field,
But he to despair will not yield;

His pain he will bravely endure,
And dream of his rescue and cure.

Though hour after hour slowly goes,
Though paler and fainter he grows,

Yet twilight, and sunlight's eclipse
Still find him—a smile on his lips.

* * *

I too have been wounded by fate;
For someone to save me I wait,

And bleeding I lie on life's field,
Still trusting my wound will be healed.

But sunset increases my pain,
And I am still waiting in vain. . . .

The Star of Hope

Sails the mastless ship of Fate
 On life's ocean dark and deep.
By the twinkling star of hope
 Into the Captain's room I peep,

And the chart of life I read—
 Curves, and lines, and dots untold;
Curves of black and lines of grey,
 Rarely but a dot of gold.

Faint and small the dots of joy,
 Black and long the curves of pain. . . .
And my star of hope grows dim—
 In the dark I sail again!

My Dreams

My dreams are merry songbirds,
They soar towards the sun.
My fate—the cruel hunter—
He shoots them one by one.

At times a dream comes knocking
Upon my window pane,
It sings so sadly, sweetly,
It breaks my heart in twain.

Then comes from fate a bullet
And kills my birdling young;
I see it groundward falling
With half its song unsung. . . .

The Coroner's Verdict

When they some day will find me dead
 Of love and love's sweet pain,
Some coroner o'er my corpse will try
 The cause to ascertain.

He'll wrinkle long his forehead wise,
 His verdict thus he'll start:
"The evidence all goes to show—
 He died of weakened heart.

His heart was frail, and then, perhaps,
 He was exposed to cold. . . ."
Thus will decide the poet's death
 The coroner wise and old.

And through death's slumber I will list;
 Within the cooled-off breast
My heart again will take on flame
 And burningly protest:

"This heart was frail? The heart of flint,
 That stood fate's sharpest darts,
That throbbed with hope, and love, and faith,
 The strongest heart of hearts?"

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

Did I take cold? whose soul was flame,
A sunbeam every breath? . . .
My life, old fool, to you was strange,
As strange is now my death!"

Shadows of the Past

If past sorrows and dreams were all dead,
Like a shadow from memory fled,
Like the tears that for them I have shed,—
 Were sad moments but moments to last—
 I would willingly bury the past.

But each dream on life's battlefield slain
Rises ghost-like again and again,
And I strive to expel it in vain,
 Perished visions keep haunting me yet—
 How can I past sorrows forget?

Misspelt

Fate my life did write—
Never spelt it right;
This is why I felt
All my life misspelt. . . .

First it blotted youth,
Then my faith in truth.
Left on love a stain,
Stead of joy wrote pain;
Crossed out in the end
Comrade, mate and friend,
Till all life, indeed,
One mistake I read.

If to spell—I ask—
Is so hard a task;
And capricious fate
Is illiterate,—
Why then could it spell
Other lives so well? . . .

Mother

Of all the words in human tongue
There is a word which *is* a song,
There is a word we must express
With pleasure sweet as a caress,
With joy as radiant as a beam,
As tranquil as an infant's dream,
A word of magic and of lure,
A word that makes us child-like pure—
 That wondrous word is *Mother!*

Of all the memories of youth
When love and happiness were truth,
When with a thousand diamond eyes
Looked lovingly on us the skies,
When tree and flower, field and wood
All smiled and whispered: "Life is good,"
When we had faith in God and man—
No memory is sweeter than
 The memory of *Mother.*

Of all the friends in life we make
But one will never us forsake;
Will crown our joy and share our woe,
Will stay with us, though others go,

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

Her lips will bless, though others curse,
Who, when we're grown, is still our nurse,
Who'll dream of us when we are far,
And be through life our guiding star—
 That faithful friend is *Mother*.

And I had one in days gone by. . . .
She died? Oh, no, she could not die!
When life seems void and men seem vile
I hear her cheer, I see her smile,
I feel her presence ever near,
When sad—I see her falling tear,
When sick—she watches o'er my bed—
She is not dead, she is not dead
 That Angel called my *Mother*!

To My Son

My son, there is a higher aim,
 A better aim,
 A prouder aim,
Than gold and gold-bought pleasures.

My son, there is a greater wealth,
 A truer wealth,
 A rarer wealth,
In nature's hidden treasures.

My son, there is a loftier law,
 A juster law,
 A holier law
Than priest's or Rabbi's preaching.

My son, there is a nobler creed,
 A simpler creed,
 A happier creed,
That bird and plant are teaching.

My son, there is a better good,
 A truer good,
 More lasting good,
Than men on thee can shower;

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

My son, there is a finer love,
 A deeper love,
 A sweeter love,
In breeze, and blade and flower.

My son, there is a higher school,
 A freer school,
 More famous school,
Than lecture-hall and College;

My son, there are the hills and vales,
 The woods and fields,
 The lakes and streams,
Where nature teaches knowledge.

My son, to man if right thou speak,
 If good thou speak,
 If truth thou speak,
He still may not believe thee.

My son, let nature be thy friend,
 Thy mate and friend,
 Thy bosom friend—
She never will deceive thee.

A Soul's Journey

I

Onward, onward sped the Angel
 Nearing to his goal,
Swiftly in his wings he carried
 To the earth a soul.

Topaz, amethyst and opal
 Interfused in one
Was the soul that softly glimmered
 Like the spring-born sun.

From on high a bright-winged angel
 Joyously looked down,
On the glowing spark that broke off
 From a cherub's crown.

And he whisperingly blessed it;
 "Live for love and mirth,
Unspotted as in heaven
 Pure remain on earth!"

II

Fast and faster hurried Satan,
 Nearing to his goal,

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

From the earth he swiftly carried
Through the clouds a soul.

Gloom and shadows veiled the orbit,
Whither Satan sped;
And the soul he bore deep sadness
All around it shed.

In her grave they laid a woman
Tired and fall'n in strife;
Someone laughed and scoffed and cursèd
Earth and men and life.

War (1916)

War

On sea and shore!

Man's mind is mute; his cannons roar;

No thought, no word, but gun and sword,
And death—Supremest lord!

Fight

By day and night

For mind is wrong, and Might is right;

For Peace is shame, and Slaughter—fame,
In Satan's hallowed name.

Well

Reflect, and tell:

Will ever end the reign of hell?

And search and scan, and find who can—
Will ever man be man?

Vae Victis

Long vanished is my youthful dream
That made of life a poet's theme—
It dried up like a shallow stream,
 And left behind life's mire.
No trace is left of that deep power
That crowned each day and graced each hour,
Made earth a garden in its flower,
 Illumed by love's great fire.

Long gone are childhood's faith and hope—
That gave to life its depth and scope,
That made me climb life's mountain slope,
 And know no fear nor danger.
The fight is o'er. . . . There comes a lull;
My soul is mute, my eye is dull;
The heart that was with passion full
 Is now to life a stranger.

And I was strong, oh, giant-strong!
And how I once to fight did long!
Against life's ugliness and wrong
 I battled like a hero!
And fearing neither life nor death,
I mountains moved with boundless faith.
I melted rocks with love's hot breath—
 Cold hearts below life's zero!

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

And I was proud—yes, princely-proud!
I never yielded to the crowd;
And when I spoke—my voice was loud,
 And clear, and bright, and truthful.
And when I sang, my song was bold,
It warmed the souls that life made cold,
In young that grew untimely old,
 In old that ne'er were youthful.

Oh, do not ask me how it came
That I should yield to this great shame;
For—maybe, I am not to blame—
 There were no friends around me.
I felt my struggle and my pain
For world and men were all in vain;
And link by link I forged the chain
 With which at last life bound me.

And now I plod the trodden track,
And sometimes when I would go back,
I feel that will and heart I lack,
 And know there's no returning;
And in life's flood without an ark,
When winds are cold and nights are dark,
I wait till quenched is that last spark
 That in my soul is burning.

Part Three
Echoes of Exile

The Hunt

I

Piping flutes and clashing cymbals,
Swarthy gypsies dance and play;
Pan Brovitzky—Polish Squire—
Entertains his guests today.

Tinkling glasses, glowing faces,
Flashing eyes and sparkling wine,
Pan Brovitzky's friends are sportsmen
Of an old, a noble line.

Now the guests and hounds are ready:
Huntsmen fill the squire's court,
Cups are emptied, rifles loaded,
Horses saddled for the sport.

II

Sunset nears. The fog grows denser,
Mantled is the wood in gloom;
And the Northwind sweeps the snowdrifts
With its giant icy broom,

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

Roads effacing, tracks erasing,
 Leaving of no path a clue.
Far away beyond the forest
 Plods his way a weary Jew.

After six long days of working
 'Midst the tillers of the soil,
He goes home to meet the Sabbath
 Bidding rest from care and toil.

Dreaming of the Princess Sabbath,
 Heaven's bride so sweet and mild—
Home he hurries where await him
 His pale wife and only child. . . .

III

The riders are leaving the forest. . . .
 Brovitzky, the crowd passing through
Sees silent and humbly saluting—
 The dreaming and shivering Jew. . . .

The sportsman calls loud to his comrades
 Excited and merry and gay—
"See, comrades, a beast is before us—
 A joke on this cur let us play.

These leeches they spin not and toil not,
 Yet live on the fat of the land. . . ."
And loosing his bloodthirsty wolfhounds
 He utters the fatal command.

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

And helpless the horror-struck victim
Escapes in despair to the wood;
In vain! They are swifter than he is,
The hounds that are hungry for blood.

A shriek—and the dogs overtake him.
The joke is amusing indeed,
Afar rings the noblemen's laughter,
Accomplished is nobly the deed. . . .

IV

Song and mirth, and jovial chatter
Fill the wood and echo loud;
Galloping proceed the sportsmen
Blood-excited, gay and proud.

The affair was so amusing—
How he fought with hounds untamed. . . .
Not in vain are Pan Brovitzky
And his noble neighbors famed.

Laughter, mirth and jovial chatter;
Proud and happy is the crew. . . .
Bleeding, in the snowdrift buried,
Still and frozen lies the Jew.

V

Bright and cosy is the cottage
Nestling in the wood;
With her babe a pale young woman
At the window stood.

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

Pressing tenderly her darling
 To her heaving breast,
She is dreaming of her husband
 Due for Sabbath rest.

“Never has he missed a Sabbath,
 Why tonight so late?”
Moaning is the wind and sighing,
 Knocking at the gate.

But at last the door springs open,
 In some peasants ran
“Still and frozen we discovered
 In the wood this man.

Who is he, this hapless stranger,
 Can you, woman, tell?”

* * * * *

With her babe pressed to her bosom
 On the corpse she fell.

The Madman

. . . .Before my window night by night
He watched the stars with wild delight. . . .

Who was this madman? None could tell;
One night—I still remember well—
I spoke to him. . . . With burning eyes
He told me why he searched the skies.

A lone and orphaned Jewish boy,
His childhood was deprived of joy;
He lost his father ere his birth,
Not long his mother stayed on earth.
He had no brother, sister, mate,
Deprived of love he knew but hate,
Until he took a loving wife—
A sister, friend, and mate in life.
A child was born—a longed-for guest—
Who made his home a love-blessed nest.
He toiled all day, but did not grieve,
For when he came back home at eve,
All care and worry of the day
His loving angels kissed away. . . .
And then. . . . Oh, then that fateful day!
Their town besieged by beasts of prey;

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

And men were slain, and infants maimed,
And mothers racked, and maidens shamed,
And some escaped to hide in caves,
And some in ruins found their graves,
And yells and wailings pierced the sky—
“Pogrom” they called it—God knows why,
The mob was merciless and wild—
That day he lost his wife and child. . . .

He found the mother calm, at rest,
The pallid babe pressed to her breast,
Her face, as ever, sweet and good—
Her lips a trifle stained with blood. . . .

He prayed in vain; there was no hope,
The skies were mute, and would not ope. . .
He sat alone; none heard his cry:
Until one night he saw the sky
Lift higher, higher from the sod,
Until it reached the zone of God . . .
And to his gaze was then revealed
The blue, the boundless heaven’s field,
And angels numberless in crowds
Were sowing stars among the clouds. . . .
And there ’midst stars that gently smiled
He recognized his wife and child. . . .

Since then when stars the night-land greet
His wife and child he comes to meet.

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

He speaks to them. . . . with him they stay
Throughout the night, till break of day.

“But tell me—asked he—pale and sad—
Why should the people call me mad?”

A Chance Acquaintance

The night was mild. . . .
The moon looked down
Upon the town
 And faintly smiled. . . .
She calmly came,
Approached me near,
And whispered: dear,
 Tonight I'm free. . . .
I have no home. . . .
Would you not come,
My friend, with me?
 I was a child!
Her face was fair,
Her gait was proud,
Her gaze was bright,
 She clasped my hand
And held it tight,
I did not mind—
She seemed so kind,
 I went with her. . . .
I asked her name,
She told me not;
Her father's name—
She long forgot;

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

Her mother's name?
She whispered low:
 "It is a shame—
You shall not know." . . .
 And then she spoke:
"You are too young
To understand. . . .
I had a heart
Which someone broke,
And then he flung
Each part
Into the street.
He broke with it
My youth as well. . . .
And e'er since then
My heart I sell
To men I meet,
Each night a bit—
To thousand men;
And if you care
One part to share,
Then come with me—
Tonight I'm free. . . ."

 I gazed at her,
And for a while
I thought her smile
Betrayed a woe,
A hidden fright—
My heart was stirred—
I never heard

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

Of broken hearts
That sold in parts.
 I bade her go. . . .
She looked at me
Imploringly
As off she stepped. . . .
 And as I went
In musings bent,
She laughed aloud,
And straight she wept. . . .

The Graveyard in France

Somewhere in France, where the cannons were
thundering,
Three hundred Jews lie forever entrenched;
Wafting in twilight pale cherubs are wondering
Why these young spirits were quenched.

Lone are their graves, with no symbol adorning them,
Neither a crescent, a cross, nor a star;
Mothers beweeching them, sisters bemoaning them
Never will know where they are.

Maybe an eagle, will, hovering over them,
Tired of its flight, on the graveyard descend;
Keenest of sight, it will gaze and discover them,
Greet them maybe as a friend.

Maybe an eagle will their silent history
Save from the graveyard and carry on high;
Maybe that heaven will solve their sad mystery—
Whom they have died for and why?

To Free Russia (1917)

Free Russia, I owe you a song,
O land of my love and my hate,
Long have I suffered, too long
For coming on earth through your gate.

I hear you have thrown off your yoke,
I hear you have broken your chain;
But my childhood and youth you once broke
Can never be mended again.

My heart with deep gladness was filled
When hearing your freedom's sweet voice,
But my near and my dear you have killed
They are not with me to rejoice.

Your people are no longer slaves,
High flutters the flag of the free,
But from nameless and premature graves,
A black waving flag I can see.

Free Russia, I owe you a song,
The land of my birth and life's spring,
But you made me weep far too long—
How can you expect me to sing?

To the Satisfied

I have suffered for love and for freedom,
 And bitter and deep was my pain,
But I see you in slavery happy—
 And fain would I suffer again.

I have struggled for love and for freedom
 As dreamer, as man and as Jew;
But fain would I perish in struggle,
 Than live and be happy as you!

The Torah

Through the roar of thunders,
 Lightning, cloud and smoke,
Hark, the God of Wonders
 To His People spoke.

“I am God; no other
 Shall my Kingdom share;
Man I made Man’s brother,
 Man for man shall care.

Swear not, steal not, kill not,
 Hold your parents dear;
Free the slave—he will not—
 Bore his servile ear!

Envy not your neighbor’s
 House or field or wife.
Room to live and labor
 For all men has life.

Tread not vice’s mire,
 That the heathens trod. . . .”
Thus through cloud and fire
 Spoke the Hebrew God.

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

And like fire glisten
 These great words to men;
When will men then listen—
 God in heaven, when?

“No News”

(A war-time letter)

From my native townlet
Sister writes: “All’s well.
Brother, do not worry,
‘Nothing new to tell.’

“Save, perhaps, you know it—
And it is not new—
That of all our people
Now is left but few.

“Twice was brother David
Wounded by a shell;
Thought he could be cured, but—
‘Nothing new to tell.’

“Uncle Joe was injured;
Cousin Sam as well;
Doctor tried to save them—
‘Nothing new to tell.’

“As to cousin Harry—
Fate to him was kind
Came back sound and healthy,
Pity he is blind.

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

“And my husband Morris
Was reported well,
Now he’s listed ‘missing.’
‘Nothing new to tell.’

“Food, of course, is lacking,
Just as coal and wood;—
As we are not many,
We need little food.

“Seems that we are winning;
All is going well;
Brother, do not worry—
‘Nothing new to tell.’”

Woman

(After the Midrash)

When Jehovah first created
Mount, and vale, and field, and wood,
He looked round with satisfaction,
And pronounced it: "Good."

Every prey-beast in the forest,
Every song-bird in the air,
Fish and reptile, tree and flower—
"Good!" did he declare.

When at last he made the woman,
Bright as sunshine, fair as day,
He regarded her in silence—
"Good" he did not say.

Just in silent admiration
He looked on for one short while,
And all seven heavens kindled
With the Artist's smile.

"I have finished all creation—
Bird and beast, and man and elf,
All are good; but with this woman
I surpassed myself.

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

“Tree and flower, vale and mountain,
Nothing, nothing that I made
Is endowed with grace and beauty
That can never fade.

But this woman's grace surpasses
Earth below or skies above,
She will animate creation,
Fill the worlds with love.

She, the source of life and beauty,
Will her grace to life impart,”
And with pride looked down the Master
On his work of Art. . . .

A Faithful Woman

He whom heaven blesses
With her sweet caresses,
With her eyes to greet him,
With her smile to meet him,
With her word to cheer him,
And her spirit near him,—
He's the happiest member
Of his tribe and race.

May life's cares be endless,
He is never friendless,
For her eyes escort him,
For her cheers support him,
Guide him and protect him,
If he fall—erect him,
Keep aglow hope's ember
Through life's hardest race.

Ne'er her heart will falter,
Ne'er her faith will alter,
Like a star above him,
She will guide and love him,
Crowning and adorning
Life's fair May, life's morning,
And in life's December
Bring him peace and grace.

Part Four
Chequered Shadow

A Dead Rose

As the summer closes
 And its splendor goes,
Of your last-plucked roses
 Bring me, child, a rose.

That when tempest rages,
 And the sky is blind,
'Mong some poet's pages,
 I your rose may find;

That in cold December,
 In a storm-worn day,
I may still remember
 Glowing hours of May;

That when clouds will capture
 Heaven's golden beams,
I'll recall with rapture
 Half-forgotten dreams;

That the faded flower
 To my mind may bring
In lifes' autumn hour,
 Golden hours of spring.

In Tempest

The storm with a lash of a lightning
 Made earth in its rain-blood to welter,
And crouching, the people are running
 From alley to alley for shelter.

And I—oh, I welcome the tempest
 And scoff at the pale, frightened faces;
In tempest is struggle and freedom;
 And sweet are its savage embraces. . .

Roses

I passed by a rose-studded wall,
And did an old legend recall:
"The spirits of babes after death
Give roses their color and breath."
Thus roses, I mused, are alive,
Like infants they frolic and thrive,
Like infants they slumber all night,
Awaking with sunshine and light;
And babe-like their moods change each while;
When sun-kissed they glimmer and smile,
And when at eve going to sleep,
Their sulky heads nod, and they weep. . . .
 And as I the mystery guessed,
A rose to my bosom I pressed,
And while its fresh breath I inhaled—
It opened its cup and it paled. . . .
In anguish I cast it away,
And prostrate before me it lay,
A lark that winged by, sadly trilled:
"A babe, a live babe you have killed!"

Wounded Trees

The old forests around Chattanooga
 With tombstone replete and with shell,
What a sad, yet a wonderful saga
 In language of statue they tell.

Though long mute are the bugles that sounded,
 Though the cannons stand breathless and still,
Yet the sobs of the trees that were wounded
 Still resound over valley and hill.

Once I heard them their anguish reciting,
 While reproachfully gazing on high:
“See, we never took part in the fighting—
 So why did they injure us, why?”—

Some leafless, some crippled, some broken,
 All bearing the marks of wild strife,
They still stand as a symbol, a token
 Of the struggles and battles of life.

Living trees that should nature bejewel,
 Shamed and naked, their fate they deplore;
“See how heartless is man, oh, how cruel—
 To wound innocent trees in his war!”

The Storm

The cloud-blinded skies,
With mist-bedimmed eyes,
 Revengeful, and sullen, and grey,
Unleash the wild storm—
The earth to transform
 To chaos, and wreck, and decay.

On its merciless way
Like a huge beast of prey,
 When sensing its victim draw near,
The storm with a yell
Bursts on meadow and dell,
 On trees in the wood struck with fear.

With daggers of light,
It darts through the night,
 The heart of the forest around,
And looks on with glee,
As tree after tree
 Drops, heart-broken, dead to the ground.

The sudden-roused river,
With shudder and shiver,
 Responds to its thunderous roar,

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

And wave after wave,
Like a ghost from the grave,
 Upsurging, runs madly ashore.

I gaze from my room
Enshrouded in gloom,
 And list to the beats of my heart;
I gaze, and I wonder,
If tempest and thunder
 Are not of my spirit a part?

Twilight Melody

Twilight around me is spreading,
 Lonely I wander and pale;
Dead lies the day on the mountain,
 Born is the night in the vale.

Breezes are whispering vespers,
 Lulling the meadows to rest,
Full is the air with sad longing—
 Calm is, however, my breast.

What do I care if a day go—
 Gold-robed and ray-jewelled day—
To the abyss of my twilight,
 Nearer the end of my way?

Day-light, they tell me, is joyous—
 I love the pale, moon-lit sky,
Pondering, pining and longing,
 Musing and dreaming as I.

Twilight has secrets and wonders,
 Sunset has magic and lure,
Spirits bespotted by sunshine
 Bleached in the twilight grow pure.

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

Forests and lakes that in sun-light
 Frolic and dazzle with beams,
Are in the shadow of twilight
 Castles and fountains of dreams.

Forests and lakes that are smiling,
 Skies that are bragging with gold,
What, pray, can they have in common
 With spirits of sorrows untold?

Sweet is the sad hour of twilight;
 Like in a mirror I then
See in all nature reflected
 Heart-hidden longings of men.

Gladsomely-gloomy is twilight,
 Best in that hour I believe,
Legends, and fancies and phantoms
 Dreamer and nature can weave.

Beams

Golden beams are dropping, dropping
 Through the sun-pierced heaven's pall;
Golden beams in mellow showers
 On the earth incessant fall,
With a golden broom the heaven
 Sweeps the vales and forests all.

Was on high a sun-globe broken,
 And its fragments dropped on earth.
Why, reflecting, are they sparkling
 In each eye aglow with mirth?
Why to golden dreams and phantoms
 They in hearts are giving birth?

Is it heaven's golden harvest,
 And the reapers dropping sheaves?
Or do trees of Heaven's Eden
 Lose their golden autumn leaves?
Why with rapture and enchantment
 At their breath each bosom heaves?

As I pass through field and forest,
 Gold is scattered everywhere:
O'er the mirror of the streamlet,
 In the crystal of the air;
God! How opulent Thy heaven,
 Having so much gold to spare!

Snowflakes

Snowflakes spotless, pure and white—
Covered all the earth last night.

In the morning every track
Under human foot grew black.

Then a raven from a tree
Mockingly cawed down to me:

“Nought that from on high comes pure
Can or will on earth endure.”

Shadows

Shadows, shadows, shadows,
All around me growing,
Like the sea-tide ebbing
Like the sea-tide flowing.

Shadows, shadows, shadows,
Creeping, crawling, sliding,
In the vales and forests
Like the night-thieves hiding.

Shadows, shadows, shadows,
Gazing gravely, mutely,
Following in my footsteps,
Watching me minutely.

Shadows, shadows, shadows,
Gloomy, ghastly sliders;
With a cobweb decking
All the earth like spiders.

Shadows, shadows, shadows,
Everywhere they find me!
Of my life of shadows,
Ever they remind me!

Sea and Man

I have watched the sea, the mighty sea
 That none can scan,
The abyss that ebb'd, and flow'd, and foam'd
 Ere life began,
And I mused: how short-lived and how frail,
 How small is man!

Then I watched the heart, the human heart
 That none can scan,
That to build new worlds, when life is gone,
 Will scheme and plan,
And I mused: how long-lived and how strong,
 How great is man!

The Summer's Funeral

That day I saw Nature in mourning:
The earth wore a veil of dark-grey;
The heaven looked sullen and tearful,
The wind piped a funeral lay.

Flights of birds passed in mourning procession,
And requiem sang in the wood,
And the bare-headed trees—the chief mourners—
All sadly and prayerfully stood. . . .

Then I knew they were burying the Summer—
My childhood's best comrade and friend;
And I joined in the dismal procession
And I mourned at my comrade's sad end.

For I knew that the Summer was joyful,
And radiant, and lively, and bright;
And wherever he came he brought with him
Glad sunshine, and song, and delight.

For I knew that the Summer was wealthy
With gems and with jewels untold,
He had silk-woven carpets in meadows,
And forests and lakes full of gold.

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

He had rubies and diamonds in dew-drops,
And silver and sapphire—in sky;
And I pitied that he, blessed with riches,
As poor as a pauper should die.

So I wanted, in token of friendship
To lay on his coffin a wreath,
But, alas, I could find no live flowers
In garden, in field, or on heath. . . .

Death of Day

Down a blood-stained ladder
Climbs the sun in West;
Earth grows sad and sadder,
Tired, it longs for rest.

Somewhere sings a linnet,
Sad is her sweet lay,
And meseems that in it
Weeps the dying day.

Willows, aspens, mutter,
Shivering with fright,
Louder grows the flutter
Of the wings of night.

Timid bluebells weeping
Nod their heads with fear,
As they see the creeping
Shadows gather near.

Light and shadows blended
Shade the mount and stream;
In the air suspended
Hangs a doleful dream.

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

Evening ghosts assemble;
 Stalk, and blade, and leaf,
Pulse and throb and tremble,
 As my heart with grief.

Through a moon-lit sky-light,
 Peeps a sea of grey. . .
People call it Twilight,
 I, the "Death of Day."

Poet and Peasant

Once we walked together,
Farmer Ben and I,
He discussed the weather,
I—the fleecy sky.

“See,” said I, “the charming
Velvet vale beneath,”
“This no spot for farming,”
Growled he through his teeth.

“Look, yon trees they slumber,
Weary heads all bent.”
“These,” he said, “as lumber
Are not worth a cent.”

When the grove came nearer,
And its lake beyond;
I exclaimed: “God’s mirror!”
He—“a fishless pond!”

“Boundless fields behold, Ben,
Golden sheaves untold.”
But what I called golden
He called merely gold.

The Song of Rest

Rest, Rest, Rest,
This in life is best,
Blessed, blessed, blessed
He who can have rest.

To the field, the lake, the mountain,
To the stream, the brook, the fountain,
To the shrubs, the trees, the flowers,
To the dreamy twilight hours,
 I have left the noisy city,
 And I sing my care-free ditty:

Rest, Rest, Rest,
This in life is best,
Blessed, blessed, blessed
He who can have rest.

Here I am among the freemen,
Free from men and free from women,
Free from artful smiles and graces,
Free from artless painted faces,
 In my hammock I am swinging,
 Swinging, swinging, slowly singing:

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

Rest, Rest, Rest,
This in life is best,
Blessed, blessed, blessed
He who can have rest.

Childhood's days I am rehearsing,
With the trees I am conversing,
All I tell them they believe me,
They, I know, will not deceive me,
They embrace me so discreetly,
Lull me, sing to me so sweetly:

Rest, Rest, Rest,
This in life is best,
Blessed, blessed, blessed
He who can have rest.

The Game

Yonder on the ground I see
Sportive children gay and free,
Playing circles—one, two, three,
 Circling round and round.

Faster, faster, merry band!
At your captain's high command,
Chained together hand in hand,
 Turn and turn around!

Playing, darlings, is no shame,
We, the big ones, do the same,
We, too, play the very game
 On this globe—our ground.

“One, two, three! and one, two, three!”
Days, and months, and years thus flee—
We may think our game is free—
 Yet our hands are bound. . . .

Part Five

The Dawn of a Nation

A Jewish Portrait

Look at him keenly,
Gaze at his face,
Read in his features
The riddle of race.

Who is he—prophet;
Savant or sage?
What country bore him,
What clime and what age?

Where does he come from,
Where does he go?
What is before him—
Triumph or woe?

What does he dream of—
Sunset or morn,
Centuries buried,
Ages unborn?

What does he strive for—
Has he an aim?
Which is his homeland?
What is his name?

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

Deep are his wrinkles
 Hide they his soul?
Piercing the ages,
 Seeking life's goal?

Look at him keenly,
 Guess if you can;
He is the riddle
 Of time and of man.

The Old Year

1917

How long, O God, how long, I ask
Will be our sad and dismal task
To number days, to count the years
By streams of blood and floods of tears!
How can I on this day rejoice,
When round I hear the thunderous voice:
“By cruel hand, by gruesome deed,
 Thy brothers fall, thy brothers bleed,
Thy brothers suffer wrong and woe—
To fight the battles of their foe. . . .”

The trumpet blows, the trumpet calls,
The sun is set, the evening falls.
In vain I seek the Star of Hope. . . .
A thousand graves before me ope;
A thousand ghosts emerge and cry:
We fought and fell, but know not why!
There is no land for which in strife
We die to give our children life.
Nor wife, nor child, nor home, nor friend,
Could we protect, could we defend.
Where tempests rage and oceans foam
There is our wandering people's home;—
 Their bed—the sod, their roof—the sky;
We fought and fell, but tell us why?

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

The trumpet blows, the trumpet calls,
The sun is set, the evening falls,
I hear the cry, I see the graves,
O year of blood, O fate of slaves!
O blackest fate, O reddest year,
In Times' deep ocean disappear,
And drown our grief, and woe, and pain—
And never swim ashore again!

“Your Homeland?”

(Question put to me on Draft Registration Day)

They asked me where my homeland is—I stood a while
and thought;
Reflections deep, reflections sad to me their question
brought.

My homeland? I who make my home in every clime
and zone,
Who has a thousand homes on earth, a thousand
homes and none.

The land where I was born, that land away beyond
the foam,
It was my birthplace, I must own, it never was my
home.

And where my forbears found their graves, as they
the earth did roam,
Those are the lands that hide their bones, they never
were their home.

My ancestor escaped from Spain, from Torquemado's
flame,
He refuge found in some Dutch town—I do not know
its name.

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

In Russia's soil my parents lie—their fate, alas, was
sad:

They paid for every breath of air—a home they
never had.

My brothers o'er the earth are spread, from one
another far;

I know they too are homeless, though I know not
where they are.

And I by fate from clime to clime, from land to land
am thrown;

A denizen of every land, a citizen of none.

They asked me where my homeland is—I stood a
while and thought:

Reflections deep, reflections sad, to me their question
brought

How could I satisfy their quest, if answers must be
true.

I blushed and murmured: pardon me: I am . . . I am
a Jew. . . .

To the New Year

Eternal Time is spinning
 A web that none can rend;
We saw not its beginning,
 We shall not see its end.

Time goes bereft of reason,
 Of purpose, goal, or aim;
A day, a month, a season,
 Is but an empty name.

Life's book we tear in pages,
 Call each a year of grace,
Though oft the woes of ages
 Are crowded in that space.

And countless days of terror,
 Of bloodshed, woe, and fear,
We give, in fatal error,
 The guileless name of year.

Oh, were the years but comments
 On human hopes and fears,
We should some years call moments,
 Some moments—endless years.

My Chanukah Candles

Eight little candles
All in a line,
Eight little candles
Glitter and shine.

Eight little candles
Smile and relate
Tales of a people
Heroic and great.

Eight little candles—
Each little flame,
Whispers a legend
Of honor and fame.

Eight little candles
Bashfully hide
The soul of my nation,
Its glory and pride.

Eight little candles,
Sparklets of gold,
Tell me of battles
And heroes untold:

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

Heroes undaunted,
 And noble, and true,
Heroes who knew
 How to dare and to do;

Heroes who taught
 Generations to be
That man can be brave,
 And that man can be free.

Eight little candles,
 Look at them well,
Floods could not quench them,
 Tempest—not quell.

Modest and frail
 Is their light—yet it cheers
Israel in exile
 Two thousand years.

Eight little candles,
 Enchanting my soul,
Point to me, show me
 An aim and a goal;

Whisper: life's struggles
 Are not all in vain;
Sons of the brave
 You shall triumph again!

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

Eight little candles—
 Their quivering gleams,
Speak to my heart
 In a language of dreams.

Dear to my soul
 Is their smile and their cheer,
Sweet to my ear
 Is their whisper to hear.

Courage, but courage,
 Maccabee's brave son,
Fight for the right
 And the battle is won!

David's Tent

*"May the Merciful One restore the Fallen David's
Tent" (Succoth prayer)*

Year by year the Jew in exile,
 Sad and weary, lone and bent,
Met his feast of fruit and harvest
 In a tent.

Not cement, or stone, or iron—
 Straw and lathwood, frail and weak,
Was his festal habitation
 For a week.

Low the autumn-wind was sighing
 Through the rough-hewn wooden bars;
Through the roof of straw shone faintly
 Falling stars.

There he sat, devoutly praying:
 "Heaven, see, my strength is spent;
When will you re-build the fallen
 David's Tent?"

"Lo!" the kindly heaven answered:
 "David's Tent will be at length
Built by men of heart and courage
 Will and strength!"

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

And the Jewish heart awakened
 At the heaven's mighty word;
As of yore the brave Maccabee
 Grasped the sword!

And his legions, marching eastward,
 Hearts unbowed, and heads unbent,
Shall erect a never-falling
 David's Tent!

The Call

I hear the nations' trumpet call:
The fort of tyranny shall fall,
For Mother-earth has room for all,
For nations great and nations small,
The world is nearing its re-birth,
When free as life shall be God's earth. . . .

 I hear the nations' trumpet sound,
But vainly do I look around
To find my People in the strife.
Demand its freedom, land and life. . . .
Oh, where are you who taught of old
The flag of freedom to enfold,
Who thirty centuries ago
Proclaimed that slavery shall go?
Are you 'midst nations free and brave
To be the last, the only slave?
Is liberty's eternal fire
In swamps of ghetto to expire?
 Your thirst for freedom who did quench?
I see you bleed in every trench.
On thousand battlefields you fight,
For foreign lands, not for your right,
On every wave, and isle, and strand—
But where, oh, where is, pray, your land?

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

Arise, O ancient race, arise,
Your young and old, your strong and wise,
You still have pride, you still can love
The field below, the sky above.
You still can plow, and till, and toil,
Your sweet, your soul-bejewelled soil.
Arise, O ancient race, arise,
Your young and old, your great and wise,
Proclaim your will, your right demand—
Your nation's freedom, and your land!
Lest you forget—repeat your vow—
Your day has come, your hour is now!

Messiah's Trumpet

*Written on the day of Britain's Declaration that the
British Cabinet will support the Jewish Claim
for a national home in Palestine.*

Oh, can it be, oh, can it be,
The ghetto-slave at last is free?
Oh, is it true, oh, is it true
The hated Jew. the hunted Jew,
The nomad of two thousand years,
Whose life was death, whose joy was tears,
Whose past—of blood a shoreless stream,
Whose future—but a mystic dream,
Whose home was nowhere on God's earth—
Is he approaching his re-birth?
Is he to break his ghetto-chain,
And be a nation once again?

I hear a voice, a mighty voice:
Rejoice, O Israel, rejoice!
I hear a wondrous voice around,
And recognize the sacred sound.
This is Messiah's longed-for horn,
Proclaiming: Judah is re-born;
That ended is his age-long strife,
That he has gained his Right of Life!

S O N G S A N D D R E A M S

Be blessed this greatest day, be blessed!
From North and South, from East and West,
We hear, Messiah, thy command,
And go to build our old-new land!

A Leader

(My first impression of Louis D. Brandeis)

He stands before us, stately, tall,
 With head erect and eyes aglow,
And as he speaks he to us all
 Appears a seer of long ago.

As last he sees that beauteous goal,
 He ever knew, but could not name;
At last the spark that in his soul
 Long smouldered, burst into a flame.

He speaks . . . his mellow voice imparts
 Unswerving faith with every sound;
His words drop slowly on our hearts
 Like golden rain on sun-parched ground.

We know him not, but cannot fail
 To know, when once we see his face:
This is the man whom men will hail
 A leader of an ancient race.

After the British "Declaration"

Somehow my joy is with sadness still blended,
 Something weighs down on my heart like a stone;
Hard to believe that our nightmare is ended—
 That we can the Moloch of *Golus* dethrone.

Seeing the people with blindness still smitten,
 How can they gaze on the new-rising sun?
Why is no joy on their faces yet written
 Why are the clouds of our exile not gone?

Life looks still dimmer, and men look still smaller,
 In this hour of sunshine, this moment supreme;
Small is the mind that can hold but a dollar,
 Narrow the heart with no room for a dream.

Willing, unwilling, I feel my faith shaken—
 Slaves, who in slavery blossom and thrive,
Can they from lethargy ever awaken,
 Rise from the dust and to freedom revive?

Centuries homeless, and hated, and driven,
 Have they the courage their land to demand?
And when the land to the people is given,
 Is there a people to give to the land?

Homeward

A Jewish land! a Jewish home!
No longer all wide world to roam,
No longer all the earth to tramp,
No longer bear the servile stamp.
No longer hide my Jewish face
For fear of torture and disgrace.
No more expose my soul for sale
And buy the air that I inhale. . . .

Two thousand years pursued and wronged
My forebears hoped, and pined, and longed,
And every day three times did pray
That God might send that longed-for day.
A Jewish home! a Jewish land!
Still fleet of foot, still strong of hand,
We answer, Mother, to thy call,
We come, we come, thy children all;
From North and South and West we hail
To build thy town, to plant thy vale,
Thy wounds to heal, thy shame to drive,
That you and we at length revive
From foreign lands we hasten home—
O Motherland, we come, we come!

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